



THE REAL DIRT
ON DIRT
IN ONTARIO

Soil Dumping is at the Tipping-Point!

Hundreds of thousands of truck-loads of urban excavated soil is being dumped at old gravel pits, wetlands, farms, and at small airfields throughout Ontario. In some cases the soil is contaminated with petroleum, heavy metals, and other toxins. Astonishingly, this dumping is essentially unregulated and unmonitored.

As a result, rural Ontarians have become increasingly alarmed that their drinking water will become polluted, and that food crops and farmlands will suffer from contamination.

- On average, 20 to 25 million cubic meters of excess soil are excavated annually from construction sites across Ontario. That's equal to one square kilometer of earth, 25 meters in height.

— Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario

Ontario including the GTA is experiencing some of the most rapid growth in North America. For instance, constructing the facilities for the 2015 Pan/Parapan American Games is predicted to generate more dumping of soil than ever before — some clean and some contaminated. In 2001, the *Brownfield Act* encouraged the cleanup and reuse of polluted sites (Brownfields) by reducing environmental liabilities when waste soils are remediated or removed. This served to increase the amount of contaminated urban soil being removed to rural Ontario.

The Oak Ridges Moraine, Niagara Escarpment and Greenbelt are becoming popular destinations for the dumping of such soil. The naturally rolling landscape is changing as its valleys are filled and leveled. There are legitimate concerns that this change alone will negatively effect the hydrological functions of drinking water aquifers, and will impact surface water runoff and groundwater recharge. Consequently, MPPs, residents, municipalities, and Conservation Authorities have become increasingly concerned.

- One dump-site on the Oak Ridges Moraine, in an area defined as having a vulnerable groundwater aquifer, was found to have high levels of cyanide in the soil.
- A sheep farm discovered that the soil it received was particularly toxic to sheep and the toxic soil had to be removed.
- A homeowner, who received a few loads of “clean fill,” no longer drinks the well water after discovering it contains dry cleaning fluid — a known cancer-causing chemical.

The Oak Ridges Moraine is a source of drinking water for over a quarter of a million people and both the Greenbelt and rural Ontario's farmland are where our food is grown. There is no federal or provincial regulation that specifically tracks, assesses or enforces the movement and disposal of soil. If the dumping of "clean fill" is regulated, it is a municipal responsibility. The Ministry of the Environment will only order monitoring, or removal, if an adverse affect is found or if there is evidence to suspect it. However, there are no mechanisms in place to assess if the soil is clean in the first place.

→ **At a recent symposium, industry associations and government agencies acknowledged that the lack of oversight is a problem.**

A commercial fill operation (e.g., in a farm field or an old gravel pit) can receive hundreds of truckloads of soil daily accompanied by truck traffic, road wear, noise and dust — which may continue for years. Yet, in many cases, these commercial dump-sites operate merely by obtaining an over-the-counter municipal permit without public consultation or soil testing.

Volunteer Community Groups have sprung-up across the province to complain to their respective mayors and MPPs — especially concerning debris in soil, petroleum smells, truck traffic, noise, and dust. After more than a dozen problem soil dump-sites were identified, the Ontario Soil Regulation Task Force was formed to actively highlight the issue in order to better protect the health and safety of rural Ontarians.

The Ministry of the Environment has the authority to order the monitoring of incoming soil, the sampling of dumped soil, or the launching of an Environmental Site Assessment. If it determines that there is an adverse affect, it can order the soil be removed. However, this is done on a case-by-case basis where negative impacts are suspected and when such is brought to the ministry's attention. Ontario's Ministry of the Environment has the expertise, the mandate, and the regulatory clout to provide a sustainable solution to better assure that Ontario's food and water do not become polluted or contaminated — but, it has only issued a voluntary guideline.

→ **Support the Call for a Clean Soil Act**

Vist the Task Force's website where you can easily send a direct message to the Premier's office.

WWW.OSRTF.CA

Ontario Soil Regulation Task Force

Debbie Gordon dgordon@stormcoalition.org 905.841.9200 x121

Josh Garfinkel joshg@earthroots.org 416.599.0152 x15

Ontario Soil Regulation Task Force Member Groups

Save The Oak Ridges Moraine www.stormcoalition.org

Earthroots www.earthroots.org

Lakeridge Citizens for Clean Water www.lakeridgecitizens.ca

Rural Burlington Greenbelt Coalition www.facebook.com/RuralBurlingtonGreenbeltCoalition

Clarington Citizens for Clean Water and Soil www.claringtoncitizens.ca/waterandsoil

Tecumseth Pines Residents Association www.tecumsethpines.com

East Gwillimbury Citizens for Clean Water www.egcitizens.com

North West Whitby Residents for Clean Water

Concerned Citizens of Bloomington

Concerned Citizens of Baldwin

Concerned Citizens of King Township www.cckt.ca

Concerned Citizens of the City of Kawartha Lakes

Citizens Against Fill Dumping www.stopfilldumping.ca

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